

# Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

(20)

## 1 TIMOTHY: DUTIES AND ORDER IN THE CHURCH, 1 Timothy 2:1-3:13

### The Overseers of the Church, 1 Timothy 3:1-7

(1 Timothy 3:1-7) **Introduction:** the office of *bishop* is probably the same office as **elder** or **presbyter** or **minister** in the New Testament. All three words refer to the same person, to the minister of the gospel and of the church.

- 1) What are the qualifications of the minister?
- 2) Who should be preaching the gospel and filling the pulpits of the Lord's church?
- 3) Who should be considering the ministry—what kind of person?

Before discussing the individual qualifications against which all pastors are to be measured, however, Paul gives some helpful insight into the call to spiritual leadership.

1. [The office of minister or bishop \(v.1\).](#)
2. [Personal qualifications \(v.2-3\).](#)
3. [Family qualifications: the minister or bishop must rule his own home \(v.4-5\).](#)
4. [Spiritual qualifications \(v.6\).](#)
5. [Community qualifications \(v.7\).](#)

**2. (1 Timothy 3:2-3) Minister— Bishop— Elder: the minister or bishop of God must be qualified; he must meet some personal qualifications; he must be a person of great Christian character.**

1 Timothy 3:2-3 (NASB)

<sup>2</sup>An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

### The Moral Character of a Godly Leader (continuation)

7. The minister or bishop must be “**apt to teach**”: **able, capable, skillful, and qualified to teach.**

William Barclay has such an excellent comment on this point that he must be quoted:

“It has been said that the duty of the Christian leader is 'to preach to the unconverted and to teach the converted.' There are two things to be said about this. It is one of the disasters of modern times that the teaching ministry of the Church has not been exercised as it should be. There is any amount of topical preaching; there is any amount of exhortation; but there is little use in exhorting a man to be a Christian when he does not know what being a Christian means. Instruction is a primary duty of the Christian preacher and

leader. But the second thing is this. The finest and the most effective teaching is not done by speaking, but by being. Our ultimate duty is not to talk to men about Christ, but to show men Christ. Even the man with no gift of words can teach by living in such a way that in him men see the reflection of the Master. A saint has been defined as someone 'in whom Christ lives again'" (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p.95).

Matthew Henry also has an excellent comment:

"This is a preaching bishop whom Paul describes, one who is both able and willing to communicate to others the knowledge which God has given him, one who is fit to teach and ready to take all opportunities of giving instruction, who is himself well instructed in the things of the kingdom of heaven, and is communicative of what he knows to others" (*Matthew Henry's Commentary*, Vol.5, p.815). ([Matthew 28:20](#); [1 Timothy 3:2](#); [1 Timothy 4:11](#); [2 Timothy 2:25](#))

**Thought 1. Note:** the minister must be rooted and grounded in the Word of God in order to teach.

The overseer in the church must be **able to teach**. Here is the only qualification that relates specifically to his giftedness and function. *Didaktikos* (**able to teach**) appears only here and in [2 Timothy 2:24](#) in the New Testament.

An elder *must be* a highly skilled teacher, who works hard in his studies and proclamation (cf. [1 Timothy 5:17](#)).

**That is the one qualification that sets him apart from the deacons.** Since, as noted below, **the primary duty of the overseer is to preach and teach the Word of God**, being gifted for that is crucial.

Some may wonder why Paul includes this qualification in the midst of a list of moral qualities. He does so because effective teaching is woven into the moral character of the teacher.

**What a man is cannot be divorced from what he says.** "He that means as he speaks," writes **Richard Baxter**, "will surely do as he speaks" (*The Reformed Pastor*, 63).

To preach and teach God's Word is the primary task of elders ([1 Timothy 4:6](#), [11](#), [13](#), [16](#); [1 Timothy 5:17](#); [2 Timothy 2:15](#), [24](#); [Titus 2:1](#)).

It was for that purpose that they were given to the church ([Ephesians 4:11-14](#)).

While all believers are responsible to pass on the truths they have learned in God's Word, not all have gifts for preaching and teaching ([1 Corinthians 12:29](#)). Those who aspire to pastoral duty, however, must be so gifted.

**What criteria identify a man as a skilled teacher?**

**First**, as noted above, a skilled teacher must have the gift of teaching. It is not that natural ability that makes one a good teacher; *the gift of teaching is the Spirit-given enablement to teach effectively the truths of God's Word*. Timothy had the gift of teaching ([1 Timothy 4:14](#); [2 Timothy 1:6](#)).

**Second**, a skilled teacher must have a deep understanding of doctrine. "A good servant of Christ Jesus," Paul wrote to Timothy in [1 Timothy 4:6](#), "[is] constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of... sound doctrine."

**Richard Baxter** writes,

“He must not be himself a babe in knowledge that will teach men all those mysterious things which must be known in order to salvation. O what qualifications are necessary for a man who hath such a charge upon him as we have! How many difficulties in divinity to be solved! And these, too, about the fundamental principles of religion! How many obscure texts of Scripture to be expounded! How many duties to be performed, wherein ourselves and others may miscarry, if in the matter, and manner, and end, we be not well informed! How many sins to be avoided, which, without understanding and foresight, cannot be done! What a number of sly and subtle temptations must we open to our people's eyes, that they may escape them! How many weighty and yet intricate cases of conscience have we almost daily to resolve! And can so much work, and such work as this, be done by raw, unqualified men?” (*The Reformed Pastor*, 68-69).

The deeper the reservoir of doctrinal knowledge a man has, the more skilled and applicable will be his teaching.

**Third**, a skilled teacher must have an attitude of humility. To teach the truth with an arrogant attitude would only serve to undermine the very truths being taught. Paul reminded Timothy that: ([2 Timothy 2:24-25](#))

**Fourth**, a skilled teacher is marked by a life of holiness. Paul exhorted Timothy to “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” ([1 Timothy 4:7](#)), and to “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness” ([1 Timothy 6:11](#)).

He must be credible and live what he teaches. Paul exhorted Timothy to “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but *rather* in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe” ([1 Timothy 4:12](#)).

*The teacher must be the prototype of what he asks his people to be.*

**Fifth**, a skilled teacher must be a diligent student of Scripture. In the familiar passage in [2 Timothy 2:15 \(NASB\)](#), Paul writes, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.”

**Sixth**, a skilled teacher must avoid error. This criterion is closely related to numbers three and five listed above. It is tragic when men, seeking preparation for the ministry, attend a school that doesn't honor God's Word. While they may survive with the basics of their faith intact, they will almost invariably lose their convictions. Paul repeatedly warned Timothy to avoid false doctrine ([1 Timothy 4:7](#); [1 Timothy 6:20](#); [2 Timothy 2:16](#)), wise counsel for us as well.

**Finally**, a skilled teacher must have *strong courage* and *consistent convictions*. He must not abandon the truth and shipwreck his faith (cf. [1 Timothy 1:18-19](#); [1 Timothy 4:11, 13](#)).

At the close of his ministry, he should be able to say with Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith” ([2 Timothy 4:7 \(NASB\)](#)).